



# Mother's Information

## *Breastpumps and Milk Supply*

Going back to work or school after the birth of your baby can be a challenging time for new mothers. By providing breastmilk for your baby when you are separated, you can experience a special closeness with your baby throughout your day. You will also give your baby the best possible nutrition and protection against disease.

This handout contains tips for expressing milk for your baby, introducing bottles, and dealing with common issues that can arise after you return to work or school.

### *Meeting your baby's nutritional needs*

You can meet your baby's nutritional needs while working and breastfeeding.

*Consider the following options:*

- ♥ While at work, express and refrigerate your breastmilk for the next day's feedings. Continue to breastfeed whenever you or your baby are together, **or**
- ♥ Visit your care provider during your lunch break for feedings or have your care provider bring your baby to your worksite, **or**
- ♥ If your baby is older and you have established your milk supply, you can breastfeed when you and your baby are together and have your child care provider feed your baby iron-fortified infant formula while you are at work. Pumping even once a day helps keep up your milk supply so that you can nurse your baby when you are together, even if you choose to use some formula when you are at work. Any breastmilk at all is better than none, and any amount helps to protect your baby's health!

### *Choosing a Breast Pump*

Breastmilk can be expressed by hand or with the use of a breastpump. There are many pumps to choose from, but only a few are designed to support your milk supply during full days apart from your baby. A two-sided electric pump is usually the best choice. A lactation consultant, La Leche League Leader or WIC counselor may be able to help you find the right pump for your needs. If you qualify for WIC, they can provide you with a pump. A WIC directory can be found at the department of health website: [http://healthvermont.gov/local/district/district\\_office\\_or\\_by\\_calling\\_\(800\)\\_464-4343](http://healthvermont.gov/local/district/district_office_or_by_calling_(800)_464-4343).

**Electric:** If you will be pumping 2-4 times a day, a two-sided electric pump is the best choice. An electric pump is faster and more efficient as it allows you to pump both sides at once and feels most like a baby's suck, which is important to maintain your milk supply. You can rent or purchase these pumps. One-sided electric pumps have a weaker suction and are not designed for full-time use.

**Battery:** This type of pump may work well for occasional use but isn't recommended for the mother who returns to work full time. The suction lessens as the battery gets weaker.

**Manual:** A manual pump operates by pushing and pulling a piston or squeezing a handle. The ones that operate by squeezing a handle usually imitate a baby's suck more closely. Because manual pumps involve a repetitive movement, your hands may tire and this method can take longer. A foot-powered pump can be set up to pump both sides at once with good results.

**Hand Expression:** Some mothers prefer to express milk by hand because it feels more natural. "Manual expression" is convenient as there is nothing to buy, break, wash or carry. With practice some women become very efficient with this method.



## *Tips for Pumping*

Some mothers are able to express only a few drops of milk their first try. Others express a few ounces. The amount of milk you express can change depending on many things: how long it has been since you last breastfeed your baby or expressed your breasts, how comfortable you are expressing, the time of day, your diet, the amount of sleep or rest you are getting and if you are going through a stressful time.

**Practice makes Perfect:** Remember, pumping and hand expression improve with practice. You may pump only a few ounces when you first start, but keep at it, pumping gets easier the more you do it. A nursing baby is more effective than any pump, so if you only express a small amount it doesn't mean your baby isn't getting enough at the breast.

**Avoid medications that can decrease your milk supply:** If you plan to use the pill or "the shot" for birth control, be sure to tell your doctor you are breastfeeding. Some types of contraceptives work better with breastfeeding than others. Your care provider can help you choose the best one for you. Over-the-counter decongestants like Sudafed can reduce your milk supply, so avoid these while you are breastfeeding.

**Encouraging Let-down:** The "let-down" occurs many times during a feeding or while pumping. Having a "let-down" is important because it contracts the glands in your breasts and helps the milk flow faster. Some mothers feel a let-down when they hear a crying baby or at the thought of their own baby. Because pumping and hand expressing feel different compared to a nursing baby, you may need to do a little work to encourage your let-down. This can be done in several ways:

- ♥ Find a comfortable, private or semi private setting such as an unused office, storage room or restroom lounge area. Be sure you are seated in a comfortable position with your shoulders relaxed. Relax your mind by taking the phone off the hook, imagining a peaceful setting, or listening to calming music.
- ♥ Your pump doesn't have to be on the highest setting to get milk out effectively. Choose settings that feel the most like your baby. Stimulating a let-down is the most important part of effective pumping.
- ♥ Gently massage your breasts right before expressing. Stimulate your nipples by rubbing or rolling them.
- ♥ Relax by taking a few deep breaths and imagining a pleasant place. You can imagine your baby at your breast, look at a photo of your baby, or feel and smell one of your baby's blankets.
- ♥ Don't watch the bottles or count ounces while pumping – worrying about getting enough can actually decrease the amount that you pump. Think of the benefits to your baby of any breastmilk you can provide, and feel proud of yourself doing this for your baby.
- ♥ To encourage multiple let-downs, massage your breasts once in a while as you pump. When single pumping, switch breasts when the flow of milk lessens, expressing from each side several times during a session. Try pumping for 10-20 minutes per breast. Some breasts release milk more quickly than others, so don't worry if you take longer to pump than a co-worker.
- ♥ Complete emptying signals your breasts to make milk faster. Milk left in the breast does not go bad. But it does signal the breasts to make less milk. You don't need to wait for your breasts to feel "full" to pump – in fact, pumping more often will stimulate your breasts to make more milk, while waiting for them to feel full signals them to slow down production.



## *How often to pump*

If you are returning to work more than six weeks after your baby was born and you are working eight hours a day or more, you will need to pump your milk at least once for each feeding missed while you are separated from your baby – generally 3 times in an 8-hour day. Each pumping session will take about 20 minutes.

If you are returning to work earlier than six weeks, you may need to express more often at first to establish your milk supply, either at work or at home after feedings. Pumping is a skill that takes time to develop. Whichever method(s) you choose, allow time to practice before returning to work.

## *Where to pump*

Before you start your maternity leave, tell your supervisor or human resources that you will need a private place to express milk for your baby when you return to work. This can be an unused office or conference room, a converted storage closet, or a private nursing lounge. If your employer is reluctant to provide this for you, remind them that providing breastmilk for your child means a healthier baby – meaning that you will miss less work in the first year. More information on why an employer should support breastfeeding mothers can be found at the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project home page, accessed from [www.breastfeedvermont.info](http://www.breastfeedvermont.info).

## *Ensuring your milk supply*

**Limit artificial nipples:** Using a pacifier could decrease your milk supply by limiting the number of times your baby sucks at the breast. Remember, the more you nurse, the better your milk supply. It is alright to have your baby use a pacifier while you are away if you think he is getting overfed when he wants to suck for comfort – just leave it with your care provider. Use slow-flow or “newborn” nipples on bottles so your baby doesn’t get used to being fed more quickly than your breasts can flow.

**Pump frequently:** If you need to pump more milk than you are getting during the work day, you can add a pumping session before your baby wakes up, right when you get to work, or after your baby has gone to bed. For many women their milk supply is highest first thing in the morning, so some women pump one side while nursing their baby on the other before work. Remember that frequent nursing and/or pumping sends your body the signal to produce more milk. You may not see more milk right away, but the stimulation of pumping increases your supply within a few days.

**Nurse your baby whenever he shows signs of hunger** such as rooting, mouthing and sucking on fingers or hands. Crying is a late sign of hunger. By that time your baby may be too fussy to eat easily, and may not have the patience to wait for a let-down if he is used to the rapid flow from a bottle.

**Mom is for nursing:** Try to avoid bottles and formula when you are at home and can breastfeed. Consider providing extra nursing time after work, at night, on days off, and before work. If you think your supply is low, nurse more frequently when home.

**Take care of yourself:** Get plenty of rest, and eat nutritious food and drink to maintain your health. Your diet should be well balanced and include lots of fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates and fluids. (You need more calories breastfeeding than during pregnancy.)

**Consider sleeping near your baby:** This helps some moms get more rest and makes night nursing easier. It is normal for babies to nurse at night. This provides valuable calories and comfort. Unlike taking a bottle to bed, it does not increase the risk of cavities. Putting your baby to sleep on his back and sleeping in the same room as your baby decreases the risk of SIDS.



## *Milk Storage Guidelines*

Information about safe storage and handling of expressed breastmilk can be found on the handout "Milk Storage Guidelines", which is included with this packet of information from the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer project. If you did not receive this document, it can be viewed and printed from the Breastfeeding Friendly Project section of [www.breastfeedvermont.info](http://www.breastfeedvermont.info) in the handouts for Child Care Providers.

## *Troubleshooting breastpump problems*

A breastfeeding baby with a good suck can remove most of the milk from one breast in about 10-20 minutes. A good pump should do the same. If you are having problems with your breastpump you can:

- ♥ Clean all parts of the pump that touch the milk with warm soapy water. If a part is gummy with dried milk, soak it in vinegar for several hours then wash and rinse well.
- ♥ Check all parts for cracks. Are the parts attached properly and tightly? Hairline cracks can affect suction. Double-check the pressure settings to be sure they haven't been turned down too low.
- ♥ Replace the valves – the thin valves that create suction in a pump are meant to be replaced at least every six months. Replacing old valves is a low-cost way to improve suction.

If you are still having problems, call the person, clinic or company where you got your pump.

## *Introducing A Bottle*

Introducing a bottle is easy for some babies but requires more time for others. Practice time with a bottle can begin anytime after breastfeeding has been successfully established, usually after the first four to six weeks. The amount of milk you produce is determined by how much milk is removed from your breasts and the stimulation of frequent suckling, so be sure to pump each time a bottle is given so that you keep making as much milk as your baby needs.

- ♥ Bottle-feeding requires less effort from a baby than feeding at the breast. Use nipples with small "slow-flow" holes to help keep your baby from preferring the faster flow of the bottle.
- ♥ Ask a family member, friend or neighbor to help introduce the bottle. An occasional bottle with 2-3 ounces of expressed breastmilk is enough to familiarize your baby with the bottle. If your baby has a difficult time accepting a bottle, be patient; continue to offer the bottle every few days and allow the baby to explore it at her own pace. Babies can be fed from cups, spoons or medicine droppers if they won't take a bottle.
- ♥ When bottle feeding, don't push the nipple into your baby's mouth – instead wait for feeding cues and rooting to begin, then allow him to gape widely for the bottle just like when breastfeeding. Other tips for bottle-feeding the breastfed baby can be found in the handouts for child care providers at the Breastfeeding Friendly Employer Project section of [www.breastfeedvermont.info](http://www.breastfeedvermont.info).



## *Nursing Strikes*

Sometimes a mother will think that her baby is weaning when, in fact, the baby is becoming more interested in her surroundings. This is typical at around four months of age, and again at around eight or nine months. Nursing strikes may have several causes, all of which can be handled with patience and understanding of your baby's needs.

- ♥ **Teething or gum soreness:** allow your baby to chew on a cool teether before nursing
- ♥ **Over stimulation from sights or sounds:** nurse in a quiet place and when your baby is sleepy
- ♥ **Reaction to a change in routine:** spend as much quiet time with your baby as you can
- ♥ **Normal developmental stage of being distracted and interested in other things:** nurse in a quiet place whenever you can, and realize that this stage will pass.
- ♥ **Preference for the faster flow from a bottle:** use only newborn flow nipples no matter your baby's age

Spending time in skin-to-skin contact with your baby, such as in a bathtub or in bed, is often the best way to work through a nursing strike. The close contact stimulates their nursing instincts and helps them feel safe and secure against the breast.

If your baby refuses a feeding and your breasts are full, pump, and offer the breast when your baby is calmer. Do not force your baby to the breast.

If your baby is impatient at the breast, you can pump until the milk just starts to flow before nursing so that your baby does not have to wait for the let-down.

## *Breast Problems*

Some breast problems are more common in mothers who are separated from their babies:

**Leaking:** Use direct pressure over the nipple if you are unable to pump. Crossing your arms over your chest is a discreet way to do this. Breast pads can be used inside your bra, but you should avoid plastic coated breast pads that can trap moisture or change them frequently. Wearing patterned clothing, a jacket, vests, sweaters or a long scarf can hide leaks. Keep an extra blouse or sweater at your workplace just in case. Leaking gets to be less of a problem the longer you breastfeed.

**Engorgement:** This can occur if your baby skips feedings or you and the baby are separated. Breasts may be warm and hard. You may need to pump more often while at work. Warm compresses before feedings or pumping and gentle breast massage toward the nipple may help release your breastmilk and provide relief.

**Plugged Ducts:** Plugged ducts can happen when engorgement is not relieved, or if your breast does not drain well because of tight clothing or a restrictive bra. You will feel tender or hard lumps in your breast. Keep nursing frequently to drain the plugged area. Warm compresses before feedings can help the breast to drain, as can gentle breast massage. Massaging the plugged area in a hot shower can be especially helpful. A plugged duct can develop into mastitis if it is not cleared. A plug is the first sign to get some extra rest and give your body the time to heal.

**Mastitis:** This is an infection due to incomplete emptying of the breast, fatigue and stress. You are sick and need time to recover, so take a day off and get the rest you need. If you feel achy or have flu-like symptoms call your health care provider. You may need to take antibiotics. Repeat bouts of mastitis mean that you may need to make more time to express your breasts at work or that you just need more rest. Remember to eat well and drink plenty of water. ***It is very important to continue to breastfeed if you have mastitis.***

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